

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Danny Cawley** <>

Date: Jan 8, 2009 12:05 AM

Subject: The dismissal of Professor Denis Rancourt

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudc.cde, barnickles

President Allan Rock,

My name is Danny Cawley and I am recent graduate of the University of Ottawa who has been following the case of Professor Denis Rancourt with great interest. I would like it known that I am appalled by the lack of respect for democracy and academic freedom being displayed in this case.

The University of Ottawa's mission statement says,

We aspire to be, among universities, the essential reference on what Canada represents: a university that is an integral part of its community, open to the world, and distinguished by its search for excellence in research, its high-quality learning environment, its passion for knowledge and innovation...

I would suggest the head of faculty consider how its actions reflect the above mission statement. From the perspective of an experienced student, it would appear the actions taken against Professor Rancourt are bordering on, if not exemplifying, hypocrisy. Attached is a copy of my honours thesis from my time at the University of Ottawa. I beseech you, read the paper and pay specific attention to the research cited within. The paper is quite short and extremely prudent; it addresses the pedagogical practices at the forefront of the debate with Professor Rancourt.

Above all, it is imperative to see that Professor Denis Rancourt and those that support him are not focused on the performance of the students so much as the growth of the students. They are facilitating intrinsic motivation and learning in accordance with the past 20 years of research on education and motivation---they are providing a "...high-quality learning environment...".

I cordially request a response from you sir, to the effect of how the University of Ottawa can justify objecting to Professor Rancourt's pedagogical techniques in light of the research I have attached.

Respectfully,

Danny Cawley

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Marjorie Robertson** <>

Date: Jan 7, 2009 4:29 PM

Subject: Fw: Professor Denis Rancourt

To: allan.rock  
Cc: claudede  
January 7, 2009

Ottawa, ON

Allan Rock  
President's Office  
University of Ottawa  
559 Cumberland Street  
Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5

Dear President Rock,

The University of Ottawa stands poised to dismiss Professor Denis Rancourt at the very hour when the academy, your students and the society it serves have most need of the radical (root) pedagogy he embraces to awaken from the ill-served conformity and dangerous complacency which dulls awareness to the many serious social and political challenges which beset our age.

As members of the community, we attended Professor Rancourt's stimulating and probing 'Activism Course' and Cinema Politica series in 2006-7. From the eclectic topics he introduced to provoke thoughtful discussion, to the broad issues he made available for exploration, to the engagement between community and academy he facilitated, to the relationships of mutual co-learning and co-teaching he encouraged, to the fostering of respect for inquiry his pedagogy embodied—we had experienced nothing like it during undergraduate and graduate level education. We witnessed cross-generational learning and development blossom over the months and be applied to events unfolding in the wider society.

This week, Canada's self-proclaimed 'national newspaper', The Globe and Mail, advanced the idea that heavy munition attacks from air, sea and land against an entrapped, defenceless indigenous population is 'measured'. An ideologue Prime Minister abandoned Canadian civilians in the Gazan assault zone while he expressed our country's support for the attack. Dissembling, secrecy and manipulation have become the hallmarks of his administration. In our beloved Canada dissenting voices are systematically ignored or marginalized by a mainstream press which is ever more captive to narrow corporate interests--creating conditions ripe for the undermining of our precious democracy. Canada keeps company with rogue states, even making secret traitorous agreements with them. The world faces what many believe will be a more far-reaching financial disaster than the 1930's depression. We are supposedly at peak oil yet oil prices have plummeted. We see governments rewarding fiscal irresponsibility, raiding the public purse thus penalizing citizens who had nothing to do with the debacles which have brought the very financial system into peril.

When is the time for 'radical re-thinking' if not now?

We urge you to resist the silencers and controllers who surround and entice you. We urge you to take a stand to give deeply needed space for 'radical' (root) new, creative and provocative thinking and new ways of being in the academy.

Retain Professor Denis Rancourt. Take the steps necessary to understand why there needs to be space at institutions of higher learning for his kind of thinking, his kind of teaching, his kind of engagement. The word provocative has many meanings---challenging, disturbing, stimulating, annoying, even goading and Professor Rancourt---we acknowledge---may sometimes be all of these--and for the highest aims. Universities will need robust flexibility to withstand the challenges ahead. Those who hide in patrician isolation and cannot deal with the kind of provocation for learning that Professor Rancourt provides will falter and fail in their educational missions.

Courage! Leadership! Start laying the much needed groundwork for the awesome challenges ahead facing our society, our generations, our time in history.

Sincerely,

Marjorie and Campbell D. Robertson

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Anne Davison** <anne@annedavison.net>

Date: Jan 7, 2009 2:00 PM

Subject: letter

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudcde, Denis Rancourt <denis.rancourt>

President Rock,

I was shocked and disgusted to learn both the news of Prof. Denis Rancourt's suspension and impending dismissal from his professorship, and the way in which he has been treated by the University of Ottawa over these past months. I am one of the many students fortunate enough to have been taught by Denis. In my seven years at various post-secondary institutions I *never* encountered a teacher of Denis' strength. He was (and still is) always willing to ask the toughest questions, which is the essence of true research and learning. Not only would he ask himself these questions, but he would pose them to us, his students; having to face the ramifications in my own thought patterns of his shining light upon controversial issues was perhaps the most challenging work I ever faced at university. Denis' teaching was not just about the textbook, but about life: we talked of personal choices, global issues, critical thinking, the best ways in which to contribute to society. Everything was pertinent. Though I took the course over a year ago, I still think daily about the concepts that were brought up in that classroom. It is not an exaggeration to say that Denis' influence has changed my view of the world. Denis introduced me to several fascinating pedagogues (including Noam Chomsky and Paulo

Freire) as well as a system of grading (pass/fail) that I had never experienced before. For all the controversy surrounding this method of grading, I speak from experience when I say that a pass/fail system was a much more motivating, wholesome and reflective way to mark students than the traditional marking systems that I had experienced in the past.

I urge you to reconsider your plans to expel Denis from the University of Ottawa. This expulsion would be a detriment to future students. You have a real chance here to make your university a bastion of academic freedom, not of corrupt, political suppression. Show the strength of your own character and do what's right for the students at the University of Ottawa.

I look forward to hearing your response on this matter.

Sincerely Yours,  
Anne Davison  
*University of Ottawa Alumnus*

@@@@@@@@@@@@@  
From: **Elizabeth Holloway** <  
Date: Jan 7, 2009 1:28 PM  
Subject: Request for public meeting  
To: allan.rock.rock  
Cc: eholl020, claudcde

Dear Allan Rock,

I am a fourth year undergraduate student concerned by the University of Ottawa's plan to fire Professor Denis Rancourt. I request that the Board of Governors hold a public meeting on the question and respond to concerns from on and off campus. As a former student of Denis Rancourt, I have personally witnessed the impact of his work on individuals and groups, within and between the student and external communities. Denis' contributions have been unique and invaluable to my experience at the University of Ottawa. Removing Rancourt from this institution will cheapen my diploma. I regret that future students may not encounter his dynamic teaching and engaging discourse. I ask that the Board of Governors move toward justice by holding a public meeting on Denis' dismissal and respond to concerns from on and off campus.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Holloway  
eholl020

@@@@@@@@@@@@@  
From: **James Douglas** <  
Date: Jan 7, 2009 12:48 PM

Subject: Re: Planned dismissal of Denis Rancourt  
To: Allan Rock <Allan.Rock>  
Cc: claudede

With all due respect Mr. Rock, the fact that Professor Rancourt belongs to a union does not have much bearing on the content of my email, or whether the university should even try to dismiss a professor because of his political ideas. You write as though the professor is just another employee in a corporation rather than considering the University as a place of higher learning where professors and academic freedom play an absolutely essential role.

**On 7-Jan-09, at 12:14 PM, Allan Rock wrote:**

Thank you for your recent message.

The relationship between the University and its faculty members, including Professor Rancourt, is governed by a collective agreement.

In all of its dealings with Professor Rancourt, the University has complied strictly with the terms of that collective agreement, and will continue to do so.

Professor Rancourt has due process and opportunities for recourse through this collective agreement and his union.

Kind regards,  
Allan Rock

---

**From:** James Douglas [<mailto:douglas.k.james>]  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 04, 2009 5:36 PM  
**To:** Allan Rock  
**Cc:** [claudede](mailto:claudede)  
**Subject:** Planned dismissal of Denis Rancourt  
Dear Allan Rock,

I am writing you this letter to try to encourage you to respect Professor Rancourt's tenure, and to use your power to prevent his dismissal.

Last year when I lived in Ottawa, I attended to a number of movie screenings that the professor has hosted, and I always had an interesting time. I think it is very good that students on campus can learn from someone who does things differently. It is important that we learn about things outside of our narrow academic field.

Although you may not agree with some of Dr. Rancourt's political ideas, I urge you to respect this difference. University of Ottawa will be better for it. People cannot have any deep respect for a university that dismisses professors based on their political ideology. How can a university function well with an atmosphere like that?

Sincerely,  
James Douglas  
Kingston, On.

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Jane Gibson** <

Date: Jan 7, 2009 11:14 AM

Subject: Suspension of Prof. Denis Rancourt

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudede

Dear Mr. Rock.

I graduated with an MA in Criminology from the University of Ottawa in 1971. Since then, I have had little contact with the university until I started attending the Cinema Politica series organised by Professor Denis Rancourt. I attended regularly for two years and during this time I have contributed to the university's fund-raising campaigns. For me, this Friday evening series has been a major success with enthusiastic participation by students of all ages. The quality of the films and discussion was far above any other such programme I have attended. This was the type of challenging environment that belongs in a university that takes seriously the notion of a "community of scholars". Professor Rancourt has been thoroughly professional in his leadership, even-handed and open to all ideas.

To put it mildly, I am alarmed at the university's plan to fire Professor Rancourt. I would like to meet with you personally to discuss this very serious matter. In addition, I believe that the Board of Governors should hold a public meeting where all points of view can be aired. There seems to have been an inordinate amount of secrecy, collusion and bad faith involved in the administration's handling of Professor Rancourt's tenure. I am willing to put time and energy into helping resolve this unfortunate turn of events.

Yours sincerely,  
- Jane Gibson (613-).

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **jcomb020** <jcomb020>

Date: Jan 7, 2009 1:05 AM

Subject: A letter protesting the proposed dismissal of Dr. Rancourt

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudede

7 January 2009

Dear Mr Rock,

I am writing to express my dismay and disagreement with the suspension and pending dismissal of Professor Denis Rancourt. I think this would be a terrible loss for the University of Ottawa (UofO) community. I have not taken any courses with Denis, but have attended the UofO Cinema Politica documentary series since 2006. This community event has been a welcome and enriching part of my life at UofO, particularly the lively and challenging discussions after each screening. At these screenings and at other community events, Denis and I have had many discussions, including heated debates. Whether I agreed with his points or not, I have appreciated him challenging my thinking, and I have benefited intellectually from these educative exchanges. My experiences at the Ottawa Cinema Politica evenings were on par with the best graduate seminars I have attended at UofO. Provocative and important subject matter was presented, followed by critically examining these controversial issues through open and respectful debate and discussion.

Another troubling issue for me is that I actually hesitated to write this letter in support of Denis because I feared the possible repercussions. That alone firmed my resolve to write this letter, because I genuinely hope that my UofO community is consistent with the UofO mission statement, which is to be “a university that is an integral part of its community, open to the world, and distinguished by its search for excellence in research, its high-quality learning environment...its passion for knowledge and innovation, and its openness to diversity. Every member of our institution will take part in our educational mission.”(1) Denis exemplified the aims of this mission statement by cultivating venues (such as Cinema Politica and the activism course) that brought the wider Ottawa community together with our academic community. This certainly enriched my own learning environment. Denis' approaches and points have consistently been innovative. And Cinema Politica was absolutely open to diversity, indeed, Denis fought to ensure there would be sign language translation for deaf community members.

Acting upon the above vision of our University means that critiques from community members like Denis should not be silenced, but should be encouraged. Dissent, conflict, and debate are important to achieve excellence in an academic environment. Firing the messenger does not burn his message. And if the message is about a problem at the University, firing the messenger will not solve the problem. No institution is perfect, and both individuals and institutions have blind spots and an incomplete view of the world and of specific problems. Therefore as stated above, every community member does have a role to play in shaping our UofO community to manifest the excellent ideals expressed in our mission statement.

I hope the Board of Governors will hold a public meeting about the proposed dismissal of Denis Rancourt, and that the process will be transparent. And I look forward to your response to my above concerns.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julie Comber  
PhD Student, Faculty of Education  
University of Ottawa/Université d'Ottawa

1. <http://web5.uottawa.ca/vision2010/mission-vision-and-values.html>

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Ilya Golub** <>

Date: Jan 7, 2009 12:24 AM

Subject: Prof. Rancourt

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudc.cde

Dear university of Ottawa President Allan Rock:

While many points of view of Prof. Rancourt are debatable, using a smallish "academic" pretext to dismiss him put the responsible for this action at a level below decency. The only way to find/prove truth is in an open debate/exchange of opinions which is the foundation of universities.

I sincerely hope that common sense will prevail, Prof. Rancourt will be reinstalled and University of Ottawa administration/faculty will resort to methods appropriate to this university's status of first rate academic institution in tackling the "problems" related to Prof. Rancourt's teaching methods/opinions.

Sincerely,  
Dr. I. Golub

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Gavin D** <>

Date: Jan 7, 2009 12:18 AM

Subject: Denis Rancourt

To: alan.rock

Cc: claudc.cde

Denis Rancourt's Science in Society course provides a valuable outlet for many students, staff and community members who wish to organize and



have productive debates, discussions, and plans for action. The course has not done any damage to the university as far as the students are concerned (who are, after all, the most important members of the institution). In fact, it is incredibly refreshing to have that course, after the laborious and, often, boring classes that so many other professors offer (they could perhaps learn something from it).

Firing Professor Rancourt will simply demonstrate that the University of Ottawa is an institution that does not openly accept change and diversity, which is certainly not the view we would want to have in this day and age. Allow him to stay and continue his valued work, and think of the students for once.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Martha Ruben** <>

Date: Jan 6, 2009 5:34 PM

Subject: Professor Denis Rancourt suspension

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudc.de, clamonta, dgr

Dear Dr. Allan Rock:

I have been informed that "Physics professor Denis Rancourt has been suspended awaiting dismissal, barred from campus, removed from his graduate students, and escorted off Campus by university police". This fact is VERY disturbing in a free society like ours, since it is Freedom of Expression (and not Denis) what has, once more, been expelled from a University. This letter is to express my profound disapproval of the University's plans to fire Professor Denis Rancourt.

Universities are the foundations of knowledge, the sources of new ideas and the pillars of free thought; they should never be controlled by the powers of the day or sold to corporate interests. There are many ways in which disagreement with the procedures used by a professor can be analyzed and processed. The authoritarian expulsion of a professor is not the correct way to proceed in a democratic and free society like ours.

Professor Rancourt has a brilliant career, and well recognized credentials. He is, actually, one of the best members of the Faculty at Ottawa University, matching an excellent teaching profile with strong research. He received some of the largest research grants in the Faculty of Science and started his university career under the prestigious NSERC University Research Fellow program, following a national competition among newly sponsored university professors. In 2001, he obtained the largest NSERC Strategic Project Grant ever obtained in the Faculty of Science, to study boreal forest lakes for five years, (the university even put out a full-page-width advertisements in the Globe and Mail, The Ottawa Citizen, Le Droit, and Silicon Valley North featuring him and his research group) and in 2008, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) renewed his grant through 2013.

How can a recognized scientific authority, like Professor Rancourt, be expelled of

the university? Which are the forces, political, economical, corporate, or personal, that are behind such a decision? Is Ottawa University going to join the dark list of universities that failed Freedom of Expression across the history of our civilization? I consider that the Board of Governors of the University should hold a public meeting to discuss Professor Rancourt dismissal, and I also would like to hear your answers to my questions as well as your reasons to dismiss Professor Rancourt.

What a poor and depressing way to start 2009!!!... I expect that the dismissal of Professor Rancourt will not proceed as started and that he receives appropriate excuses from the University for this misunderstanding...

Sincerely

Martha Ruben, M.D., Ph.D.  
Biomedical Consultant,  
Biomedical Writer, Editor,  
and Translator (EN<>SP)  
Ottawa, Ontario

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **fisker** <

Date: Jan 6, 2009 4:53 PM

Subject: A plea for professor Rancourt

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudcde

Mr. Rock,

Some people teach, others preach, but precious few can instill the will to think or act. Denis Rancourt is one of the rare professors I've had the honor of working with who managed to stimulate me each and every class. I left not a single lecture lacking a sense of purpose or a desire to put what knowledge I had gleaned into practice. Barring this man from teaching is not in the best interest of the student body as it deprives us of a valuable resource. He should be considered an asset and a powerful voice for much needed change. I strongly urge you to reconsider your attempts to forcefully remove this man from our beloved campus.

Sincerely,

Éric Nathaniel Fisk, a concerned alumnus

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **Amy Hammett** <

Date: Jan 6, 2009 1:39 PM

Subject: Very Concerned Student  
To: allan.rock  
Cc: claudc.cde  
Mr. Rock,

I am writing to express my disgust in the University's decision to dismiss Professor Denis Rancourt. This, unfortunately, is not the first time that I have been disgusted by the University's administration and am, once again, embarrassed to be a student at this university. The suspension and dismissal of Denis Rancourt is a clear attempt to silence a critical voice on this campus. I have attended Denis' Ottawa Cinema Politica, and I assure you that Denis' contribution to this campus and community were huge to say the least. These Friday evenings led to very interesting discussions and I always left considering new ideas or examining my surroundings through a new lens. This is what real education does for a person, it introduces new ideas and perspectives and encourages critical thought. I gained more critical thinking skills through events like the ones Denis hosted, than in any of my classes. Through your actions, you are not only committing a great injustice to Denis, and the other professors you are clearly setting an example for, but also to the students. I would ask to meet with you in person to reiterate my disgust, but after hearing the treatment you provide students who visit your office I will instead ask for a response to this letter explaining both yours and the administrations' actions in this situation as well as why the Board of Governor's has not yet scheduled a public meeting regarding this situation.

Sincerely,  
Amy Hammett

@@@@@@@@@@@@  
From: **Wayne Sawtell** <  
Date: Jan 6, 2009 12:39 AM  
Subject: Prof. Rancourt  
To: allan.rock  
Cc: claudc.cde

Dear President Rock,

I recently learned of the dismissal of Professor Denis Rancourt from his post at the University of Ottawa. As a student, I must say I am outraged by this action. How could any reasonable person believe that Professor Rancourt's action merit disciplinary action by the university? Aside from his stellar research record, which has brought acclaim to the University of Ottawa, Denis Rancourt is the most dynamic professor on campus and exhibits the most dedication to ensuring that his students learn important material and develop the ability to think independently. The new courses that Professor Rancourt has developed have been overwhelmingly popular among students and participating community members, despite the resistance they have received from the administration to any kind of fundamental change in pedagogical methods. No one in the administration at this university can possibly be current with the published literature on

pedagogy given that a strict adherence to grades is maintained. Grading promotes counterproductive competition among students and inhibits the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. For functional examples of non-grading alternatives, refer to the University of California at Berkeley. In the case of Professor Rancourt's upper year Physics course, he made clear at the outset of the course that all students would receive an A+ in order to eliminate the stress and anxiety associated with the pursuit of high grades and put the focus back on learning. There was no attempt at deception of either the students or the administration. Setting the grading scheme is well within the rights of a professor. The University of Ottawa has shown a severe lack of respect for this principle of academic freedom. This disciplinary action is a terrible example to send to university students who will be among the leaders of our society in the future. I ask that you make all proceedings with the Board of Governors on this issue open to the public. If the Board of Governors decides to uphold the dismissal, I urge you not to approve it.

Yours truly,  
Wayne Sawtell

@@@@@@@@@@@@

From: **David Mandelzys** <

Date: Jan 5, 2009 11:19 PM

Subject: The harassment and potential dismissal of Professor Rancourt

To: allan.rock

Cc: claudcde

Dear Mr. Rock

I am a former student of Professor Rancourt's, and a current teacher candidate at the University of Toronto. The further I go through teacher's college at OISE, the further I realize how groundbreaking and innovative Professor Rancourt's pedagogical practice was. His class evoked more critical thinking, and action than any other I experienced at University and it was what inspired me to enter education. The democratic classroom, student centered learning, interactive and engaging lessons, these were the principles embodied in Professor Rancourt's classes, and are the standard we are taught to strive for in Teacher's College.

I am appalled at the harassment that Professor Rancourt has been subjected to. I am also extremely concerned that the University of Ottawa may soon take the extreme step and dismiss Denis Rancourt, a tenured Professor. If Denis is dismissed the University of Ottawa will not only be terminating groundbreaking and thought provoking experiments in education, but losing a valuable professor that cares for and makes time for his students. I urge you to rectify this situation as soon as possible.

Sincerely  
-David Mandelzys

@@@@@@@@@@@@